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Letter dated 22 May 2007 from the Secretary-General to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to convey the attached communication, dated 11 May 2007, which I received from the Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would bring it to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) **Ban** Ki-moon

07-35701 (E) 050607

Annex

Letter dated 11 May 2007 from the Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization addressed to the Secretary-General

In accordance with Security Council resolutions 1386 (2001) and 1510 (2003), I attach a report on operations of the International Security Assistance Force covering the period from October 2006 to February 2007. I would appreciate your making this report available to the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Jaap **de Hoop Scheffer**

Enclosure

Quarterly report to the United Nations on the operations of the International Security Assistance Force

Introduction

1. By resolution 1510 (2003) the Security Council requested the leadership of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to provide reports on the implementation of its mandate. This is the twelfth such report by NATO and it covers the period from October 2006 to February 2007.

2. As of February 2007, ISAF has 33,891 personnel from 26 NATO countries and 625 from 11 non-NATO countries.

ISAF status

3. ISAF has expanded its presence and now assumes responsibility for providing security assistance across the whole of Afghanistan. ISAF also maintains a cooperative and mutually beneficial relationship with the United States-led coalition operating in Afghanistan which is known as "Operation Enduring Freedom". The coalition forces that have not been transferred to NATO continue to maintain freedom of movement throughout Afghanistan to allow for the development of the Afghan National Security Forces and counter-terrorism operations.

4. Prosecution of Operation Oqab began on 28 October 2006 to ensure that the opposing militant forces were kept off balance throughout the winter, while maintaining ISAF freedom of movement, in particular along Highway 1 from Kabul to Herat, and ensuring security for the establishment and expansion of Afghan Development Zones in volatile regions. Operation Oqab marks an important milestone for progress in the planning and execution of combined pan-theatre operations with the Government of Afghanistan.

5. Staggered transition across Afghanistan to the second phase of Operation Oqab was completed in mid-January with Regional Command South. This phase particularly emphasized operations along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border in order to deny the insurgents the ability to reconstitute and focus their operations, by disrupting and interdicting insurgent sanctuary areas, infiltration and supply routes throughout the winter.

6. The transition from headquarters ISAF IX to a composite multinational headquarters ISAF X took place from November 2006 to February 2007. It culminated on 4 February 2007 with the change of command from General David Richards to General Dan McNeill.

Overall security situation

7. The activity of the opposing militant forces has been concentrated in the south and east during this reporting period. There was no pre-winter surge in activity this year as there has been in previous years.

8. The opposing militant forces have concentrated their efforts on a campaign of low-risk, high-impact attacks, supported by a robust propaganda effort designed to undermine the credibility of the Government of Afghanistan and ISAF. Of special concern is the fivefold increase in suicide attacks in 2006 compared to 2005. In

2005, there were 25 suicide events (18 attacks, 7 incidents), and in 2006 there were 130 suicide events (92 attacks, 38 incidents). The opposing militant forces also showed indications during this period of an increasing trend to deliberately target Afghan and foreign civilians, and to engage ISAF forces with the express intent to cause collateral civilian damage.

Regional security assessment

9. In Regional Command Capital, there has been a significant decrease in the number of insurgent attacks. This is mostly due to increased counter-insurgency operations by the Afghan National Security Forces and ISAF, including the disruption of improvised explosive device cells of the opposing militant forces, both within Regional Command Capital and the bordering provinces, the increased security posture around Kabul Centre and key Government of Afghanistan installations, effective outreach to traditional and tribal leaders and well coordinated use of available reconstruction and development funds by Regional Command Capital. This activity appears to have forced the insurgents to switch their operational focus towards perceived "softer" targets of the Afghan National Security Forces and the Government of Afghanistan within the less effectively controlled outlying districts of Kabul.

10. Incidents in Regional Command North were at a level comparable to the same reporting period last year. Effective, intelligence-driven counter-insurgency operations resulted in reduced activity throughout most of the region. Attacks against the Afghan National Security Forces have decreased slightly in comparison to last year, and attacks on international and non-governmental organization personnel, while rare, still occur. Most attacks on international organization/non-governmental organizations are conducted by criminal elements, but involvement of the opposing militant forces cannot be ruled out in some cases. Attempts by influential political figures to gain a foothold in this region by allying with each other could become a serious threat to the influence of the Government.

11. The security situation in Regional Command West has remained relatively stable as the opposing militant forces continue to focus on Farah Province and primarily on key lines of communication. Attacks have been both direct and asymmetric. Insurgent and criminal activity has continued to affect much of Regional Command West, including Herat and Badghis Provinces.

12. Regional Command South has been the focus of the Taliban insurgency over the reporting period. The isolation of Kandahar is still assessed as a primary objective of the opposing militant forces, evidenced by the concentration of numerous Taliban fighters west of Kandahar City. Following Operation Medusa, insurgents re-infiltrated Panjwayi and Zhari Districts. The subsequent Operation Baaz Tsuka severely disrupted Taliban command and control in western Kandahar. Insurgent efforts in Zabul have focused on interdicting Highway 1 with improvised explosive devices and small-arms fire ambushes. Opposing militant forces activity in Uruzgan has been mainly reactive as insurgents attempt to secure their deep sanctuary areas within the province. Effective counter-insurgency operations, combined with close coordination with the existing tribal and traditional structures in Uruzgan, and the non-governmental organizations operating there, has contributed to a calming effect in those parts of the province frequented by the

Dutch-led provincial reconstruction team. Deteriorating weather this winter has also reduced the ability of the opposing militant forces to conduct attacks.

13. Activity of the opposing militant forces in Regional Command East followed the overall pattern and was concentrated around Paktika, Paktya, Khost, Nuristan, Nangahar, Kunar and Ghazni. The crossing of insurgents from Pakistan's federally administered tribal areas remained a concern in the provinces of Paktika, Paktya and Khost. ISAF operations have had a significant effect on insurgent activity, pushing the activity of the opposing militant forces away from the interior and into the border regions and reducing the effectiveness of attacks. The onset of winter was a factor on opposing militant force activity, also.

Security arrangements

14. Over the reporting period there has been implementation of various local security arrangements between affected parties. Diverse arrangements were signed in Helmand and Khost Provinces. In addition to the accord with tribal leaders signed by the Government of Pakistan in September 2006, tribes on both sides of the Afghanistan-Pakistan border in the Kunar and Nuristan regions signed a cross-border security arrangement in December 2006. Finally, early in January 2007, the newly appointed Helmand provincial Governor, Assadullah Wafa, outlined a set of security protocols as guidance to local tribal leaders for future efforts to establish and maintain a secure environment. It should be noted that there are significant, substantive differences between the various security arrangements.

Disbandment of illegal armed groups

15. In general, the progress of disbandment of illegal armed groups has been disappointing so far with, again, no significant developments since the last report. Nevertheless, the Government of Afghanistan has initiated a strategy review of the structure and methods of disbandment, in which the international community and ISAF are participating. The Afghan leadership acknowledged that the continued presence of individuals linked to illegal armed groups in influential and highly visible positions contributed to insecurity in Afghanistan. President Karzai endorsed the strategy review, and a resulting action plan, which highlights a number of key issues at the macro/strategic level that need to be urgently addressed if the programme is to move forward in accordance with the agreed conditions of the Afghanistan Compact. These issues include stronger political support from the Government of Afghanistan at all levels and the introduction of appropriate legislation to support disbandment of illegal armed groups. Some successes in Takhar and Kapisa Provinces as well as bottom-up approaches with Governors having to provide lists of complying and non-complying illegal armed groups may also reinvigorate the process.

16. Driven by the personal commitment of Professor Mujadeddi, the programme Takhim-e-Sol (Strengthening Peace) has expanded to 11 field offices and handled over 3,000 reconciliations despite a serious lack of funding. ISAF involvement in the programme consists mainly of support at the provincial reconstruction team level. ISAF will continue to encourage the international community and international and non-governmental organizations to support this Government programme. Although disbandment of illegal armed groups and the programme are not formally linked, members of both the disbandment of illegal armed groups Joint

Secretariat and the programme Commission have suggested that a two-way information exchange would be beneficial and that greater synergy would assist both processes.

Counter-narcotics

17. Following the 59 per cent increase in 2006 in poppy cultivation, the need to improve implementation of the Afghan National Drug Control Strategy remains. There is increasing evidence of a link between the insurgency and poppy growing. Considerable improvements in the capacity of the Government of Afghanistan to tackle narcotics have been made through encouraging initiatives sponsored by both the Ministry of Counter-Narcotics and the Ministry of the Interior. The National Drug Control Strategy is being implemented across the country and, from January 2007, the Ministry of Counter-Narcotics has established a functional Afghan Eradication Coordination Cell from where centrally directed eradication operations are being coordinated. Centrally directed eradication by mechanical and manual means is taking place in Helmand Province from January to March 2007 and is then likely to progress on to Badakhshan or Balkh Province from April 2007, for a further three months.

18. Governors from the 12 major poppy-cultivating provinces appear to be supporting the efforts of the Government; some are forging ahead with their own Governor-led eradication campaigns. ISAF is endeavouring to liaise closely with provincial Governors on security matters related to eradication.

19. A civil public information company is employed by the Government of Afghanistan to run the counter-narcotics information campaign. ISAF is not involved in eradication operations.

Afghan National Army

20. Complicated by poor retention, the strength of the Afghan National Army is well below the current authorized goal of 70,000, but is continuing to develop. It has been estimated that approximately 15,000 combat troops are present for duty, that is, available for operations, at a given time, in an Afghan army that has engaged in nearly continuous combat for several years running. However, the Afghan National Army is performing well in combat, especially with embedded assistance.

21. The Combined Security Transition Command Afghanistan is providing most of the training, mentoring and equipping of the Afghan National Army, and is working closely with the Ministry of Defence to improve retention and expand recruitment and training. There remains a need for additional training, mentoring and operational liaison support, such as that which is provided by ISAF operational mentoring and liaison teams. The Afghan National Army also lacks some combat enablers, and offers of such combat-enabling equipment. NATO has recently taken on the responsibility of assisting the Combined Security Transition Command in equipping the Afghan National Army.

Afghan National Police

22. The Afghan National Police still suffers from serious shortcomings which need to be addressed as a matter of priority as development of the National Police is fundamental to meeting the security needs of Afghanistan. Greater international

assistance in police training under the auspices of the European Union is under active preparation. NATO has been asked to lend logistical support to the mission, mainly through provincial reconstruction teams. NATO is currently working on the modalities for the necessary support to the European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan.

23. The challenge of building and reforming the Afghan National Police is very different from that of creating the Afghan National Army mainly because a large part of the reform work has to deal with the existing institution, whereas the Army was newly created. The number of patrolmen serving in the Afghan National Police has not been adequately confirmed by the Ministry of the Interior or the international community. The Combined Security Transition Command intends to conduct an audit to establish actual Afghan National Police numbers on the ground. Criminality and corruption are an impediment to the establishment of the rule of law and must be rooted out at all levels. The President's personal involvement in removing corrupt and incompetent police officials has been and will continue to be essential. Better and more reliable payment, combined with improved training and additional equipment, will reduce the perceived benefits of corruption.

24. Pragmatic solutions to security problems are achieving some degree of success. The Afghan National Auxiliary Police are now serving in 15 provinces across Afghanistan. An increase of 700 Auxiliary Police for Kandahar Province has been approved and, in January 2007, the Policy Action Group agreed that training of Auxiliary Police should commence in Regional Command East and Herat with the proviso that the overall Auxiliary Police numbers of 11,271 not be exceeded. Long-term solutions to the training, equipping, paying and sustaining of Auxiliary Police forces and their command and control relationships with the central government and the local authorities are still under development.

25. The Afghan National Civil Order Police is a newly formed force that will eventually grow to a total of 5,000. It will replace the Afghan Standby Police and will perform as a high quality, more mobile, better equipped and responsive element of the national police force. It will provide an urban SWAT/riot-control capability, and a more viable police presence in higher threat rural areas. The Combined Security Transition Command will man, train, equip and field an initial operational capability by 10 May 2007 for the Civil Order Police.

Judicial reform and rule of law

26. From an ISAF perspective, the slow progress of the international effort in this area remains extremely problematic as it undermines efforts to improve security. However, there has been a revitalized international effort in this arena. The international community has been meeting on a monthly basis since October in the International Coordination Group for Justice Reform, co-chaired by Italy and UNAMA. The United States chaired a rule of law conference on Dubai in December, and Italy and the United Nations will be co-chairing a high-level rule of law conference in Rome in July. These mechanisms have reinvigorated the interim Afghan national development strategy process in the justice sector. Interim strategies now exist for the Ministry of Justice Supreme Court and the Attorney General's Office. These will be further refined after the 5th meeting of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board, on 1 May, in time for the Rome conference. Italy has hired a consultant to help integrate the strategies in time for the Rome

conference, which will guide future donor assistance. Significant results remain to be seen.

27. There have also been some military-driven achievements in this reporting period. ISAF is working closely with Combined Security Transition Command with a view to continuing current initiatives, and to improving provincial assessment of justice sector status and activity.

28. In partnership with the rule of law team of the Combined Security Transition Command, ISAF will continue to promote coordination of military efforts in this area. Engagement of key leaders will continue and will include utilizing links and contacts of the Combined Security Transition Command within the Afghan justice community as well as the maintenance and strengthening of relations with the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission. There is resolve by ISAF and the Combined Command to approach this project in a united manner.

Neighbouring countries

29. A concerted international effort is under way to improve cooperation between Pakistan and Afghanistan and to encourage them to find mutually beneficial solutions to the many issues they face. In support of the efforts at improving bilateral relations, ISAF has played a leading role in the Tripartite Commission (Afghanistan-Pakistan-ISAF). The Commission continues to build military-to-military collaborative efforts and forms the most significant forum for successful coordination with the Pakistan military along the border. Effective cross-border relationships are essential to controlling and limiting the effectiveness of the opposing militant forces throughout the organization's layers of command and the Tripartite Commission will continue to play a critical role in this respect. Beyond the Tripartite Commission's military-to-military efforts, a complementary civilian effort to address the situation on both sides of the border and to deprive freedom of movement to the opposing militant forces is essential. In addition, a comprehensive international effort to improve the living conditions of all residents of the border regions, to create employment opportunities, to improve educational options, and to address tribal and ethnic grievances needs to be implemented as part of an effective comprehensive counter-insurgency strategy for the border area.

30. Other regional relations have improved, as demonstrated by the investment plans of India and China in Afghanistan.

Capacity of the Government of Afghanistan

31. The Policy Action Group, led by President Karzai and strongly encouraged by the international community, in particular the Commander of ISAF, is proving to be an effective forum in which to maintain the impetus behind various presidential and Government of Afghanistan-led initiatives in volatile regions. ISAF will continue to strongly support and nurture the Policy Action Group to ensure its longer-term relevance and effectiveness.

32. At a subnational level, and in line with traditional systems, local arrangements are being increasingly made to deal with local issues. The Government of Afghanistan supports the arrangements under the motto "Local/tribal solutions for local problems", as long as the community benefits and these arrangements do not undermine the Government's legitimacy. This also gives an Afghan lead in finding solutions.